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DATE: April 12, 1988

TO: Hazel L. Johnson, President, SEAALL

FROM: Steven D. Hinckley, Chair, SEAALL Publicity and
Public Relations Committee

RE: Report of Publicity and Public Relations Committee,
1987-88.

Unfortunately, for reasons that I will detail later in this memorandum, the report of the activities of the SEAALL Publicity and Public Relations Committee for 1987-88 is painfully brief and lackluster. Following your July 27, 1987 instructions to focus on "actual publicity" this year, I sent each Committee member an optimistic letter on September 16, 1987, (copy enclosed), in which I told them that our charge was to "spread the word" about SEAALL activities and accomplishments, regionally and nationally. I anticipated that I would contact each member and make them responsible for compiling lists of publications, in their states, that might be interested in SEAALL news. In fact, I did prepare and "fax" two announcements to Frank Houdek for publication in the AALL Newsletter (one, published in the October, 1987 issue, announcing our 1987-88 SEAALL officers, and the second, published in the December, 1987 issue, outlining the early plans for this year's annual meeting in Lexington). All publicity about the upcoming program that appeared in the Southeastern Law Librarian was sent directly to Tim Coggins by Mary D. Smith and others - none of that ever went by my desk. I was never sent any SEAALL news of "local" interest specifically to the states represented by my committee's members, and as a result, I did not feel that it was worth their time to prepare exhaustive lists of local publications that might never be used. Consequently, the sum total the committee's work for 1987-88 consisted of the preparation of two announcements, published in the AALL Newsletter.

As I hope you can tell from my September 16, 1987 letter to Committee members, I am a believer in more publicity of the accomplishments of law librarians. Unfortunately, I am pessimistic that the SEAALL Publicity and Public Relations Committee, as it is currently constructed, is capable of doing

the job. I believe that a thorough examination of the organization's publicity and public relations goals needs to be made, and I would encourage you and other Executive Board members to do so at the upcoming Lexington meeting. Although I regret that I cannot be there myself this year, allow me to share a few thoughts about the problems that the Committee faces in accomplishing its objectives, and to recommend some possible Committee changes that might lay the foundation for your discussions.

First, it must be made clear to all officers and members of SEALL that we have a Publicity and Public Relations Committee, and that all announcements and notices should be sent to the Committee Chair for his or her consideration. In that way, the Chair can decide what the appropriate publications are for distribution, and either send it to that publication him/herself, or forward it to the Committee member responsible for the state with the greatest interest in the notice. Ideally, that should include all notices that are published in the SEALL newsletter. As indicated above, I received only one thing all year from a SEALL member requesting publicity and that was Mary Smith's program announcement that she had sent to Tim Coggins. At least by doing that, I was able to fashion a similar notice for publication in the AALL Newsletter. Beyond that, the well was dry, and you cannot publicize things that do not happen! The Committee should be considered the central clearinghouse for all SEALL notices and announcements.

Second, I would suggest that the Committee have fewer members. While I understand that the goal was to be geographically diverse and large enough to share the responsibilities of the job, there is no way that there will be enough publicity work for eleven people for the foreseeable future. In fact, it takes so long to communicate with a committee of eleven, spread all over the eastern part of the country, that I truly could not justify the time expended to do that, particularly at the expense of my own job! Frankly, I think that the Committee needs a strong chairman and no more than four other members to handle all of our publicity needs. As it stands now, the Committee is unworkably large.

There should be some real communication between the SEALL Placement Committee and the SEALL Publicity and Public Relations Committee. I know that this is one of our stated goals for this year, but it has not happened. I suppose that Mary Cross and I should both take the blame for not communicating with the other, but I kept on waiting to hear something about our activities and placement efforts from someone and the word never came. I really do think that we need to get the message out to prospective employers that they should consider our placement service when seeking library staff, but I do not think that the members of the Publicity and Public Relations Committee should have to act like investigative reporters scrounging around for some news fit to print. Instead, news should flow naturally to the Committee, and

it should be the Committee's job to disseminate it to interested parties.

I hope that this does not sound too pessimistic. I am willing to take responsibility for not doing more to stir my Committee up. However, as I have said, I found this Committee to be nearly impossible to get a handle on, and I feel that some serious rethinking of the mission and structure of the Committee is needed if it is ever to operate successfully. I was honored to be asked to serve as Committee Chair, and I would be glad to do anything that I can to help restructure the Committee in the future. Please feel free to call me anytime to discuss these comments at length if you so desire.